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There are many different methods of teaching and many different methods of learning. For maximum learning, teaching styles and learning styles should be congruent; this is expecially true with the disadvantaged learner. The disadvantaged child comes to school with a certain personality, with certain needs, and with certain built-in mechanisms. He interacts with his classroom environment in a number of ways. Basically, the environment either satisfies his personality needs or his personality comes into conflict with the environment. As the child interacts with his environment , he develops a mechanism for learning as shaped by his experience. This mechanism may be either static or dynamic, depending on his interaction. Teaching styles are also shaped by the environment and personality.

One of the most effective teaching styles for the disadvantaged child is to maintain discipline while encouraging expression. A child should progress from concrete experiences to abstract principles. However, teachers of the disadvantaged should not assume that one teaching style will fit all situations. Flexibility enables the urban teacher to meet varying classes successfully and to match teaching style to the child's learning style.

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MATCHING TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

Dr. Mario Fantini Gerald Weinstein

In recent years, the notions of teaching and learning have undergone careful reassessment. Our assumptions now are: 1) There are many different methods of teaching and many different methods of learning, 2) For maximum learning, teaching styles and learning styles should be congruent - particularly with the disadvantaged learner.

Let us explore this further. The disadvantaged child comes to the school with a certain personality, with certain needs, with certain built-in mechanisms. He interacts with his classroom environment in a number of ways. Basically, the environment either satisfies his personality needs or his personality comes into conflict with the environment. As the child interacts with this and differential environments, he develops a mechanism for learning as shaped by his experiences--this mechanism may either be static or dynamic, depending on his interaction.

Thus, the disadvantaged child, who is constantly exposed to a concrete centered environment develops a concrete-oriented mental or learning style. Actually, he has been conditioned to learn in that fashion. What is the relevance, then, of the urban teacher who attempts to present a deductive lesson going from the abstract to the concrete? Does it follow that it may be desirable to create in the classroom an environment which is congruent with the child's learning styles?-for example, an inductive environment.

We have seen then that learning styles are shaped by the environment and vary greatly. On the other hand, teaching styles too are shaped by the environment and personality. We have heard student teachers in our Urban Teacher Preparation Program at Syracuse say: "I'd like to see other urban teachers in action. My master teacher is so much more dynamic than I am - I want to see if there are others more like myself who can be good teachers." This cry has been raised by many an experienced, as well as neophyte, instructor. There can be no doubt that personalities of teachers differ - there is the buddy, the disciplinarian, the boisterous, the intellectual, the calm, sincere type, and many others. It is difficult to say what the ideal urban teacher personality is; however, there are certain methods or styles which any of these personalities might use and use successfully - with the disadvantaged learner.

This learner is used to an environment in which discipline from figures outside of the home is very great - public sanctions are harsh. Yet, within the home and in his peer group, dramatic expression and action are high. It appears, then, that the teaching style most effective within the school would be one that maintained discipline (set and enforced clear rules) while, at the same time, encouraged verbal and physical expression (perhaps by role playing). It would also seem that teacher styles and techniques which realize the disadvantaged child's learning characteristics as being inductive and concrete, slow and methodical, visual and physical and disliking pressure, should be utilized.

Is this, however, really the right approach? To date, we and many others, have had a tendency to homogenize disadvantaged learners and the teaching styles that are best suited to them. It is dangerous to label all these children as sensory-motor learners. Similarly, it is dangerous to say that the inductive teaching style is the approach to these children. Yet, There is an inherent tendency in any teacher to automatically characterize a class without sophisticated assessment of each child. How many times have we heard: "This class is terrific - fast, sharp,

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verbal. They all catch on," or "I dread that fourth period class- they're all discipline problems."

We have found through theory and practice that learning styles of the disadvantaged vary greatly. Some are more receptive to the ordered, lecture-deductive approach; others respond better to a more loose, dramatic inductive approach. The major points we are making are:

1) Disadvantaged learners do not have <u>one</u> learning style
2) Teachers of disadvantaged learners must not <u>assume</u> that one teaching style is best.
3) Teaching styles should be matched to the variety of disadvantaged learning styles for more effective learning to take place.

In order for this third point to be reached, the urban teacher <u>must</u> be flexible and be able to readily adapt and vary styles to the class climate. The more open her personality is, the more spontaneous and versatile will be her style when confronted with varying classes.

There is a place for almost every personality and type of teachers in urban areas. Until the day comes, however, that pupil grouping can be done on the basis of personality and learning styles and until teachers can match their styles to meet each group, suffice it to say that the prerequisite is to realize there are different styles of teaching and learning for the disadvantaged.